Cheaper by the Dozen

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Cheaper by the Dozen

by BelladonnaWyck

Summary

Evil Muffins: Muffins so good they have to be bad

Special Agent Will Graham (seemingly titled thusly out of some misplaced sense of pity since Graham was unable to pass the rigorous testing and requirements for official agent status) has left the FBI and his career in education to pursue baked goods...

Also known as the Vet Hannibal/Baker Will au I never knew I needed!

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

Hannibal Lecter stood speechless for the first time since being rendered mute in his youth. *Will Graham,* as the file in Hannibal's hand stated, held a *very wet* dog in his arms; the same arms, and the same dog which Hannibal had seen covered in blood just the night before.

He'd gone to collect ingredients for his next dinner party; the heart and perhaps the lungs of one Edward Wilson. Edward was a patient of his, something Hannibal usually avoided with his extra-curricular activities in order to maintain distance between himself and the swine he butchered. Mister Wilson, however, had been so utterly *rude,* not only to Hannibal but to his staff and to his own dog -- Winston -- that Hannibal couldn't ignore the slight.

He'd been caring for Winston for a year already, and he'd noticed the dog's unhealthy weight, his dull coat, and the sadness gathering around his unusually perceptive eyes. It had all been more than enough for Hannibal to break from his usual routine.

Perhaps the dog had reminded him of the far more purely bred dogs of his youth, obedient working animals that had lived alongside the horses in the stables, and had been hunting partners to his father. Hannibal had always been different, but where children his age and even his parents couldn't understand him and often ignored his eccentricities, the dogs had embraced him; allowed him to hide away with them when he felt particularly overwhelmed.

When he and Mischa -- his precious *little bird* -- had fled their home, Hannibal had made sure to stop by the stables to let all the animals out, especially the dogs. They were sturdy, steadfast creatures, and he knew they would fare better in the wilderness around Lecter Manor than Hannibal and his sister most likely would.

How right he'd been.

"Sorry he's so wet, Doctor Lecter. Winston got into something this morning and I needed to wash him... *again.* And we were already running late so -" Will rambled, shifting the dog higher up his chest and receiving several calming licks for his troubles. It was the interruption Hannibal needed to pull himself from the depths of his memories, blinking slowly as he took in the boy in front of him.

Curious. This Will Graham had chosen to keep the name of his stolen companion; perhaps assigning a familiar human attachment to it that the dog himself wouldn't have. Hannibal didn't believe in fate; he'd twisted his own into something he could control, could anticipate, but he contemplated the concept as he considered how slim the chances were that Will would pick his clinic over the dozens of others nearby. He was even more inclined to believe this meeting was fated when he glanced down at the chart again to see Will's address was an hour away in *Wolf Trap, Virginia.*

Fascinating.

Mister Wilson, it seemed, had been ill-fated in his recent relocation to the same town -- working on a house in great disrepair that his accountant had assured him had *investment potential.* Edward had decided to stay in Wolf Trap to be closer to the construction, and it

seemed he'd somehow managed to catch the eye of Will Graham and leave quite the unpleasant impression.

Hannibal wondered whether Will was as meticulous as he was; whether he waited patiently for months -- or even years -- before claiming his prey. Was he the sort of killer who killed out of some morally ambiguous sense of justice, or did he kill because he enjoyed it? Or to right wrongs or punish the rude. Hannibal saw ugliness in the world and sought to correct it through transformative art; both in his displays and also at his table. He was infinitely curious whether Will would see the beauty in what Hannibal did, or whether he'd be repulsed.

He re-focused his thoughts, smiling at the struggling man. "I've certainly seen worse in my time as a Veterinarian. Please, put Winston on the examination table and I'll be happy to take a look. Is there something in particular you're here for today?" Hannibal nodded to the steel table in the center of the room and then walked to its other side, opening one of the cabinets lining the back wall and taking out some of his standard tools.

"Couple of things, actually. He's favoring his right front paw, and I'd like to have a full workup done for him; make sure he's up-to-date on his shots and that he's healthy." Will followed orders beautifully, placing the canine on the table and soothing down his head and spine when he whined at the cold against his paws. The boy cooed sweetly at the shivering dog, and soon the sounds of discontent ceased.

"How long have you had Winston, Mister Graham?" Hannibal lined up his tools along the far edge of the table, and Will stepped back once Hannibal took the stethoscope around his neck and placed it to the animal's chest. He ran his free hand along Winston's ribs and legs, making a slight noise of dissatisfaction at how well he could feel the bones of his ribcage. It was even worse than the last time he'd seen the poor creature only a few weeks prior. When he reached Winston's right front paw the dog shifted uncomfortably away from him, drawing Hannibal's attention down and away from Will.

It was precisely then that the man chose to answer. "Uh, I just got him recently. I seem to collect strays, and I just wanted to make sure he was okay and safe to join the rest of the pack." His words were practiced, as though other people had spoken them to him often enough that he had internalized them -- *collecting strays.* But the way his lips moved around the word *pack* was full of an abundance of affection strong enough to bring a smile to Hannibal's lips.

He decided not to mention his familiarity with Winston, far more curious about how far Will would take this act.

"He's malnourished, common enough in strays and thankfully easily fixed. I don't see any external parasites or anything to be concerned over with his skin, though his coat is quite dull; most likely from the extended lack of proper attention to it. I'll need to take a fecal sample to test him for internal parasites or infection."

"What about his paw?" The sweet boy asked immediately, interrupting Hannibal before he could draw breath to continue. From anyone else it would be painfully rude, but from Will, Hannibal only grew more fascinated.

“Yes, he’s favoring the right front paw. It appears he has some damage to the bottom, several cuts as though from walking across broken glass or some other abrasive surface.” Will flinched at the diagnosis and Hannibal wondered in what state he’d left Mister Wilson’s home; if perhaps he felt guilty for possibly causing Winston discomfort through possibly reckless actions. He’d seen the broken window in the front door when he’d arrived himself, sneaking back out just as quietly as he’d arrived when he’d seen Will already gloriously in action. He only wished he could have witnessed every exquisite detail as they’d unfolded.

Hannibal ignored the guilt billowing off the boy in waves, instead moving back to the cabinet and gathering a vial of cream. “Not to worry, this should ensure the wounds don’t get infected and will speed up his recovery time. I’d suggest keeping him off the paw as much as possible for the next few days. I’ll bandage him for you and give you a set of directions to follow the process on your own at home.”

Will watched with such rapt attention at every movement Hannibal made while bandaging the dog that he had no doubts the other man would be more than capable of completing the process himself at home, even without the written directions.

A few minutes later, Hannibal had Will focus on keeping Winston still while he completed all the motions of injecting him with various vaccines and maintenance shots -- all with an empty syringe with a retractable needle. The boy was so focused on keeping the dog happy and still that he didn’t even notice. It wouldn’t do for Hannibal to give Winston unnecessary shots when he knew him so well already.

“Does he need anything else, doctor?” Hearing the title from such an obliviously silken voice made something deep in Hannibal’s mind ignite with quickly tamped down desire. Will was gorgeous and seemingly uncaring of it, and it only made Hannibal more intrigued.

“He seems in good health other than what we’ve discussed. I’ll encourage you to step up his food slowly so he doesn’t overeat and harm himself and also ensure he gets plenty of fluids.” Hannibal disposed of the fake needle and vials, leaning against the table against the back wall and locking eyes with Will.

Will seemed offended by the suggestion he’d do anything less than the best for the dog. “I make all of my own dog food at home, so he’ll have only the best. Do you think it’s safe to introduce him to my other dogs?” It was the first time he’d heard Will sound so certain, so *in control,* and he was curious to know if the boy’s dogs were as well trained as he expected they’d be.

“I should say to introduce them slowly, but he has nothing infectious or worrisome of note. As long as they’re amenable, I believe you’ll be just fine.”

Will breathed a sigh of deep relief, and Hannibal smiled warmly at him, happy when it was returned by a mouth clearly unfamiliar with the motion.

Hannibal left nothing further to chance. Through his investigations, he discovered Will Graham *owned a bakery;* further convincing him of the fated nature of their meeting. As he

poured over his tablet to read more about *Evil Muffins* , complete with a truly horrendous slogan — *Muffins so good they have to be bad* — he found an unfavorable article written three years ago about the grand opening in *Tattle Crime* titled *Unfit for the field.*

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It would seem his unassuming boy was not only capable of violence, he'd once upon a time hunted *serial killers.* As Hannibal read the rest of the colorfully scathing article, more details were revealed to him. Will's early retirement had come after he'd shot and killed Garret Jacob Hobbs, a man who'd murdered half a dozen or more girls by the time they found him. And those were just the ones they *knew of.* The article from one *Freddie Lounds* showed a glorious image of Will limned in blood, his hands thick with it from where he'd failed to save the daughter of the killer. Hannibal could still see the afterimage of the photograph every time he closed his eyes.

His obsession ran deep already, and if the feelings hadn't been so novel, Hannibal might have had reason to give himself pause. As things stood, however, he continued on his path and straight into the front doors of *Evil Muffins.*

"Morning, welcome to Evil Muffins where the muffins are so good they have to be bad," a child, no more than ten or eleven, greeted Hannibal as he walked through the door, accompanied by the discordant ringing of a small bell set into the wall above the door frame. A blonde woman sitting at one of the nearby tables laughed and shot Hannibal an apologetic look.

"Wally, how many times have I told you to leave Will's customers alone? He can handle his business just fine; come finish your math homework." The boy sighed but followed orders, taking a seat beside a woman who must be his mother if their physical resemblance was any indication.

"Hello, what can I get for -" Will stepped out of the back, cleaning flour-dusted hands off on the front of an already filthy apron. He paused when he saw Hannibal, a look of confusion that quickly bloomed into a shaky smile, as though his lips were unaccustomed to the action. "Doctor Lecter. I didn't expect to see you around here. Don't you live in Baltimore?"

"I do. I'm in the area making a house call to a patient." The lie slipped effortlessly from Hannibal's lips, but he couldn't shake the suspicion that Will was just as observant as Hannibal had anticipated based on his research; the other man's eyes narrowing infinitesimally before smoothing back out.

"A Sunday mornin' house call? Well, I sure hope the animal is alright. Since you're here, would you like a muffin? I just pulled some lemon poppy out of the oven and was about to top them with a raspberry coulis." Hannibal had studied Will's menu along with everything else, and he knew this muffin didn't exist on the current menu. He let his eyes scan absently over the chalkboard menu hanging above the front counter, feigning reading.

"This one doesn't seem to be on the menu. What's the occasion?"

“You never know when inspiration will strike.” Will smirked, and Hannibal’s fingers yearned to press into Will’s plush bottom lip, pull it down to expose the bone-white teeth behind. A predator's teeth, Hannibal knew already, and something raw and primal clawed at the bone cage of his ribs; desperate to get out and see its perfect mate in action.

“It’s called the Chesapeake Ripper!” The boy - Wally - announced from his seat at the table, homework spread out before him haphazardly.

Hannibal maintained his composure, turning from the boy and back to Will, who was smiling softly at the child. When he met Hannibal’s gaze again there was a split second of something dark and deadly sleeping curled tight around Will’s irises, there and gone just as quickly as Will gave an apologetic shrug. A sleeping dragon, or perhaps something even more insidious. A shark in the shadows just before the tide washes in.

“You name all of your creations after serial killers?”

“Most of them. Some of them are named after other sinister and *evil* things.” Will waved Hannibal back behind the counter and held the swinging door of his kitchen open for Hannibal to walk through.

“Why this particular concoction?” Hannibal inquired, watching as Will settled back at his work table and pulled the container of coulis towards himself.

“The raspberry coulis is pretty obvious blood. I usually use a cherry compote but I wanted something more refined for this muffin. The rest will sound silly and probably mean nothing to you.” Will’s self-deprecating tone just wouldn’t do, Hannibal needed his boy to be far more confident in himself.

“Well, you have me dreadfully curious, now.”

Will sighed, rubbing a wrist against his eyes and leaving a streak of flour along his brow. “When I think of the Ripper I think of crisp scents and flavors, something clean but with a tart finish. I used to close my eyes at Ripper scenes and see bright yellow and smell fresh-sliced lemon. I wanted to try to recreate that here.”

“What brought this on? Is it an act of reverence or remembrance?”

“A bit of both, perhaps. The Ripper is -” Will paused, his brow furrowing in concentration as he grappled to find the perfect words. “He’s eclectic but poised. He’s bold and yet also blends into high society.”

“You think he’s a wealthy businessman of some sort?” Hannibal inquired, dangerously pressing Will for *more,* when the monster inside him shouted for him to pull back, let Will come to them; set the perfect trap so he could never get back out again, a rabbit warren maze meant to keep him forever.

“I think he’s classy, travels in elite circles and makes himself look like one of them. But in the end he’s a monster pretending to be a man. He’s ego will get him caught one day.”

Will sounded nearly forlorn by the prospect, and it shook something in Hannibal to hear the genuine care which seemed to seep into Will's voice. "You sound as though you don't wish for that to happen?"

"I don't wish for a lot of things." Will pulled the coulis closer, grabbing a spoon and scooping messy toppings onto the muffins. He finished four of them before passing one to Hannibal, a soft smile back on his lips.

Hannibal recalled the two still seated in the front part of the bakery and his thoughts darkened slightly. It wouldn't do to have another standing in the way of his perfect future with Will. "Are they your family?" He asked, accepting the muffin and a proffered knife to cut it in half with. He let their fingers touch hesitantly, a brief caress; there and gone again quicker than a blink.

"Ah, no. Molly is a college friend. We just reconnected a couple of years ago, back when I was still with the FBI. She helped me get this place off the ground, to be honest. Wally's her son. I try to help out with keeping an eye on him when she needs to work and he helps out around the bakery sometimes when he feels like it." It was clear Will cared deeply for these two, but Hannibal's beast was quieted by the soft fondness crinkling around Will's eyes. It was the sort of look one had for a family member or very close friend, not for a lover.

"It's good to have close friends by your side. Why a bakery?" Will's eyes narrowed again, but there was a playful glint to them.

"Why *not* a bakery?" He paused, huffing a laugh. "You've been studying me?"

"I take it upon myself to get to know the history of my patients so I can provide better care."

Will have a non committal hum, faux casual. What a curious creature Hannibal had found. The boy was clearly intrigued, and something deceptively knowing shown just beneath the surface of his sea-storm eyes. A dragon curled in the shadows of his pupil, *waiting.*

"You really are full service, huh? Learning owner and animal equally. You sound more like a shrink than a vet."

Hannibal grinned, showing teeth. "I was a therapist once upon a time. Then I took an interest in anatomy and veterinary care seemed a rewarding path."

"You like to play god. Being in people's minds wasn't enough for you eventually. You wanted more direct control over life and death. Saving animals is better in many ways than saving people though, isn't it? You have so much praise and worship from owners desperate to save their pets and you get to show your prowess over even the most complicated anatomy. Plus, we all know animals are better than people anyway, right? No ego. No malice. No cruelty. Just innocence and love." None of his words are accusatory, but Hannibal felt a warning blaring in the back of his mind, a shiver perched to cascade down his spine.

"Hm. You seem quite aware, Will. I imagine it served you well during your time as a profiler."

“I wasn’t technically a profiler. Not really *anything* official during my time with the FBI. I was just a professor who got caught at the wrong place and wrong time.”

“It seems to me you’ve arrived precisely where you needed to be. So was it truly so terrible as all that?”

Will paused then, his eyes shuttering and slamming closed for Hannibal’s regard. “Not always. Not even half the time. But some cases. Some of them linger. Unwelcome.”

“Like the Ripper? Do you see his kills when you close your eyes?”

Will laughed, broken from his concentration. “I see *him* when I close my eyes. And he’s never unwelcome.”

Will was a patient man, but not *this* patient. He’d been baiting Hannibal Lecter for weeks, giving him cupcakes themed after his own murders - and scones inspired by some of Will’s own darkest thoughts - and still not even a nibble of the fire he’d seen in the Ripper’s artistry.

Will had seen Hannibal the night he’d killed Winston’s abusive owner, intrigued by the man and curious to see whether the police would be showing up at his door the next morning. When no one had arrived to carry him away for his crimes, he’d grown even more intrigued. He’d thought he’d never see the strange man again, yet he’d met him the day after that tide-turning event, taking Winston to the Vet Clinic listed on his nametags; never expecting to see the man from the night before on the other side of the exam table. He’d had an excuse prepared for how he’d gotten ownership of Winston, but it turned out he didn’t even need it, *Doctor Lecter* never once questioning why Will had Winston.

That’s when Will’s thirst to know more had grown even deeper. He’d decided to do some investigating into the good doctor, and had discovered a profile that fit that of the Ripper in much the same way as Hannibal’s bespoke suits fit his form. And then he’d followed Hannibal a few nights after the man’s unexpected visit to his bakery, and he’d had all the confirmation he needed as he’d watched the Ripper do what he does best.

He hadn’t left behind anything to be found, and that’s when Will had put together the missing pieces of the profile - Hannibal was *eating* his kills. The missing organs weren’t trophies, they were *dinner.* Which meant the body count was probably far higher than anyone could ever have anticipated.

Maybe Will should have cared more. In a perfect world he would have turned Hannibal in and gotten a prolific killer off the streets and in a padded cell where he belonged. But this world *wasn’t* perfect, and Will was tired of being forced to fit in a black and white world when all he ever saw were shades of grey.

So it was with these thoughts in mind that he finally took Winston back for a check-up. Hannibal had been surprisingly kind and gentle with Winston each time he’d come back to *check on him,* and it had endeared the man even more to Will.

What Will hadn't expected was Hannibal's offer for dinner at his house.

"Doctor Lecter, I'm honored by the invitation. I'd love to thank you for how well you've taken care of Winston, maybe even introduce you to the rest of the pack. If I may, could I convince you to come to mine for dinner?" Will's mind was already whirling with possibilities, each of them more promising than the last.

Hannibal seemed to consider for a moment, something greedy and full of teeth grinning out of his whiskey eyes. "I think that could be arranged. I still need to insist on cooking for us though, Will. If that sounds suitable to you?"

A thrill shot up Will's spine and he *knew* in that moment the path he would follow gladly into the madness of the rabbit hole he'd somehow stumbled upon. "Of course. I'll bake." He paused long enough that Hannibal had nodded and looked away, focused again on his work with Winston's checkup before Will spoke again. "And I'd love to provide the meat. What were you thinking of having?"

Hannibal's entire body shifted, such a minute adjustment of his muscles anyone other than Will probably wouldn't have noticed; anyone not looking for a sign certainly would have been unaware. But Will *saw.* He saw the monster beneath the surface, closer than ever. He saw the moment Hannibal shuttered that monster behind his facade and hummed his agreement. "I'll find the perfect recipe and send you the ingredients list. If you can't find anything I'm sure my usual butcher will be able to source it."

They fell into silence then, Will's heart galloping in his throat. Half an hour later, when the appointment was complete, Will sunk his final lure right into Hannibal's mouth -- he'd always been a good fisherman.

"I don't suppose… I know this is a lot to ask. But my pack is made up of rescues, each of them taken from a bad situation and now they get to live out the rest of their days on open land and quiet forests. I know I've only just gotten Winston, but I've been thinking of getting another. Might make it easier for Winston to settle in fully." It was a lie, if only a small one, as Winston had settled in beautifully already. Quiet and intelligent, perfectly behaved. "You obviously don't have to tell me details, but if you know any of your patients who… might have a hard time with their dog and would be willin' to sell? I'd pay them a fair price to take the dog off their hands… especially if those hands might be a little *heavy* for petcare." His implication was obvious; he wanted Hannibal to arrange to get him a dog from an owner Hannibal had assumed might be abusive. Or, at the very least, ill-suited for the type of love a dog needed.

"As you say, I can't give you the patient details, however, I will take note and ask a few I know might be willing to part with their dear pet. I'll let you know if any of them agree and I'll house the dog here until you can collect it." Will saw Hannibal jot down a few names into his leather bound notebook, unable to suppress his grin.

"That'd be great, Doctor Lecter. Me and the pack really appreciate it. We always love bringing new members into the family."

The look Hannibal gave him was dark enough to blot out the sun.

Will had been good at breaking into places he shouldn't be since he'd been a young boy stealing scraps in the gulf. As he discovered, breaking into the veterinary clinic was shockingly easy. He hadn't been willing to wait, not with their dinner plans looming just a few days away. He needed to take a look at the names Hannibal had written down and find their files in the office so he could find the perfect candidate.

He found the notebook easy as anything, and then took a few minutes to break into the filing cabinet -- thank goodness Hannibal was practically archaic in his management of patient files, preferring paper over digital. Will skimmed as quickly as he could through the files associated with the names he'd found, finally settling on one that seemed like the best candidate.

Buster. The dog was a terrier mix of some kind, broad and small and even in the photo paper clipped to his file he seemed full of spunk. It helped that his owner lived alone; a woman who, based on the notes, had a tendency to leave Buster alone for days at a time and who used an electric fencing system to shock him if he wandered too far. Nothing in the file was overly critical -- nothing *incriminating.*

Will put everything back in its place, as though he'd never even been there, and made his way to pick up his new pack member.

The thing was, human meat didn't *look* different from animal meat. Will couldn't even be certain it tasted different, though he supposed he'd soon find out. He stepped back from the counter, the *veal* shanks cut and prepared on his cutting board, waiting for Hannibal's appraisal and superior cooking skills. Will could make comfort food, but he was no chef. Not to the caliber Hannibal Lecter seemed to perform in *everything.*

"Those are beautiful, Will." Hannibal complimented, stepping into Will's space at a distance that could be seen as a bit overly familiar. Will took a bold step ever closer.

"Apologies if it isn't up to your usual standard. The lamb was a little on the *lean* side." Will smiled, sweet as sugar venom, remembering the petite woman; remembering how easy it had been to take her in his hands and make her into something *more.*

He'd killed people before -- it's how he'd ended up in this mating dance with the Chesapeake Ripper after all - but he'd never let himself truly enjoy it; explore it. He'd feared precisely what had come to pass; that if he allowed himself to fully experience the sensations he'd be lost to them. He'd want it again.

He already wanted it again.

Hannibal stilled beside him, a gentle sniff as he scented the air. Will wondered if he could smell that it was human flesh sat atop Will's counter. Wondered if he *knew yet.*

“Yes, well, these will do perfectly. We’ll bed them on saffron infused polenta and top with vegetables cooked in a white wine reduction.” Will’s mouth was already watering and he nodded before realizing a key word from Hannibal’s description.

“We’ll?” He raised an eyebrow, looking at Hannibal curiously.

“You’ll sous chef, of course. This is, after all, your kitchen even if I’m borrowing it for the evening. And your spoils.” The way his lips shaped the word *spoils,* his tongue flicking up ever so slightly on the *s* and elongating the vowel. It sent a shiver up Will’s spine. Hannibal had to know Will had killed his patient, even if he didn’t understand yet *why.*

Hannibal in a kitchen was like watching a dancer on a stage and Will felt just as in awe of him as most people often were. His awe was tinged with a slow burning arousal, the knowledge that only he truly *saw* this man for who -- and what -- he was.

His desire to spill everything and ruin their little game was at a boiling point by the time they finally settled for dinner. They sat at Will’s small table pushed up against the kitchen wall, mix-matched chairs and plates Will knew would be totally out of character for Hannibal. And yet the man seemed perfectly at ease in the space, unaware of their backdrop as his attention was so intently focused on Will.

Will picked up his fork, as the host of the home it was customary for him to take the first bite even though Hannibal had prepared the meal mostly on his own with Will serving only to get in his way. Will smiled, charming as a serpent before the strike, as he lifted the fork -- full of the meat and some polenta -- and brought it to his lips, taking it into his mouth and keeping his eye contact with Hannibal as he chewed and swallowed.

“It’s amazing, Hannibal. Maybe the best veal I’ve ever had.” He praised, stroking Hannibal’s ego a bit.

Hannibal inclined his head in thanks. “Solely due to the well-sourced ingredients, I’m sure.” He praised back in kind, and Will flushed with arousal and a deeply-seeded feeling of accomplishment that washed over him.

He was tired of waiting.

“You know, I laid awake that first night with Winston sleeping so peacefully beside me, the pack all around us. I laid awake and I waited for the police to come. When they didn’t come that night or the following night I wondered *why.”*

Hannibal stilled, fork halfway to his mouth. He put it down with a level of graceful elegance no man should be able to maintain in such a moment and it brought a smile to Will’s lips. “I couldn’t very well *ask* you directly why the police never came. So I followed you instead. I followed you and I *saw.* And I had my answer as to *why.”*

“Will -” Hannibal interrupted, and Will nearly growled.

“Don’t, Hannibal. Don’t lie to me. Not while you’re sitting at *my* table, eating the meat *I* procured for us. I know you aren’t accustomed to people seeing you, seeing the *real* you, but

you're just going to have to get used to it with me. Because I *do* see you. And I want you not in spite of who you are but *because* of who you are."

Hannibal made a sound in the back of his throat like a feral, wounded animal, the meal forgotten between them. He stood, abruptly, hands in Will's collar in seconds. Will was slammed against the kitchen wall, Hannibal's body hemming him in, pressing him firmly against the wood paneling. "I recognized Buster before I even saw the offering you'd made for me in your kitchen."

Will could see the hesitance still swirling in Hannibal's eyes, could taste it on the air between them. He thought Will wouldn't understand, Will realized suddenly. Will -- as far as Hannibal was aware -- had only killed as an act of righteous fury. To add to his pack. Hannibal killed for reasons altogether his own, though Will had some suspicions as to how Hannibal chose his *meals*.

"Hannibal, I *understand.* I'm not just here because I'm a vigilante or because I think you are. I know *exactly* what you are and I appreciate it. I *want* it. I… I fought this for years. I'd kill but I'd never let myself sink into it, never let myself experience it. And then, when I went to collect Buster and our *ingredients,* I wanted to feel it like you felt it. I wanted to *know."*

Hannibal snarled, shutting Will up with his teeth and tongue, Will's lips splitting and bleeding beneath the viciousness of Hannibal's kiss. When Hannibal finally pulled away his mouth was stained crimson with Will's blood and it was Will's turn to snarl, pushing with all of his force to dislodge himself from beneath Hannibal's crushing hold before nodding towards the stairs. "Bedroom. Now."

Hannibal had never revealed himself to another. His darling Mischa had been too young -- Hannibal himself not even yet fully formed -- and Lady Murasaki had seen beneath only one carefully peeled back layer -- before Hannibal had managed to stitch himself better into his person suit -- and she'd been terrified even by that small piece of him she'd glimpsed.

He'd certainly never had another person see him so thoroughly even *with* his perfectly fashioned persona in place. Will Graham was a singularity, something as inevitable, perhaps, as gravity, and Hannibal -- for the first time in his life -- had no idea how to proceed.

Apparently, however, Will knew exactly what to do and he took control seamlessly, moving them upstairs and shutting the door to a quiet chorus of whines from his pack. He guided Hannibal to the bed, settling only his lap with a thigh on each side of Hannibal's hips. It was here that Hannibal's brain caught up to reality and he gripped Will with fierce, bruising fingers, rutting up against his ass through his pants.

"You devious, gorgeous creature. You've reduced me to base, animal instinct." Hannibal accused, running a hand up Will's spine and settling at his nape, pulling him down into another claiming kiss.

Will pulled away for a breath after several minutes, grinning like a wolf. "Apparently I've not *reduced you* enough if you're still talking." He ground down against Hannibal's cock, already

fully hard and pressing against his zipper.

Hannibal wanted to flip them, to take his pleasure out on Will's pliant body, but he was also endlessly curious to see what the other man would do. Since that first moment he'd seen him covered in blood as black as shadows beneath the moonlight his curiosity had been stoked into a raging flame. He stayed still, letting Will rock down against him and chase his own pleasure, eyes never leaving Hannibal's.

"Want my cock in your mouth. Wanna feel your *teeth,"* Will slurred, scooting up Hannibal's torso and settling on his chest, waiting for permission.

Hannibal didn't speak, instead he simply moved his hands to release Will from the confines of his pants, noticing with a wry smirk that Will had invited him to dinner without anything underneath his pants, his cock immediately exposed to Hannibal's gaze. He was uncut, like Hannibal, and leaking already at the tip. Hannibal leaned up to lick at the bead of pre-come, rumbling happily in his chest as the flavor burst on his tongue.

Before Hannibal could say anything, Will was sliding past his lips and directly into his mouth, dragging his cock across Hannibal's tongue and straight to his throat. Hannibal prepared himself in time not to gag, eyes locked with Will.

"In your *expert opinion,* as a previous psychiatrist, how obvious is my oral fixation with the mouth of a *cannibal?"* It made Hannibal shudder, visibly shaken by the words. To have Will speak so frankly about his proclivities was dangerously arousing, his fingers going tight where they rested against Will's thighs.

Hannibal, obviously, couldn't reply, but his eyes burned with desire. He sucked as Will fed him more of his cock, hollowing his cheeks and lavishing the head with his tongue. Will moaned, wanton and loud, before he started up a brutal pace Hannibal hadn't expected.

"Touch yourself through your pants. Want to see you mess your fancy dress slacks for me," Will commanded and Hannibal was helpless but to obey, moving one hand from Will's body in favor of rubbing his own cock through the soft fabric of his slacks.

It was over quickly after that, both of them losing themselves in the moment, maintaining eye contact as they fed from one another like an ouroboros of pleasure, spilling into and out of each other as though they'd been doing it all their lives.

When Will finally pulled himself free from Hannibal's soaked mouth, kissing him until his lips bled, Hannibal finally let himself believe this had all been real. Will was still *here.*

"You realize you've now killed *two* people connected by my veterinary practice. The police will be forced to investigate."

Will hummed thoughtfully, smiling broadly. "Wouldn't you rather open up some pretentious bakery in Paris or Rome, anyway? Something lavish and extravagant." Will teased, tracing his fingertips over Hannibal's exposed teeth. Hannibal let him.

"Florence."

“Pardon?” Will laughed, leaning down to lick blood from Hannibal’s swollen bottom lip. The look on his face implied Hannibal’s blood tasted like the wine of the sacrament, holy and depraved all at once. His cock gave a twitch in his sticky pants, wholly intrigued by the contradiction. He calmed himself, focusing on Will’s question.

“I’d like to show you Florence. The place where I truly felt at home; where I became a man.” Will must have known Hannibal meant where he’d *perfected murder,* but he smiled anyway, full of fond indulgence. It shook something loose in Hannibal he hadn’t realized had calcified, bringing back to life long dead sensations.

“Alright. Florence, then.” Hannibal followed Will’s gaze as he looked to their right and saw the shadows moving beneath the door; the dogs restless and curious. Will’s grin grew even wider, full of the promise of an eternity together. “Now, what about the dogs?”

End Notes

Thank you so much to Catbug for their endless patience! They asked for this prompt way back in February but then... life happened. I'm so glad to finally be able to present this gift to them and hope you all enjoy it as much as I love the idea of Vet Hannibal and Baker Will making (probably in poor taste themed) baked goods!

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!